

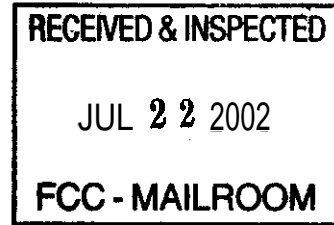


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JOHN M HAIRSTON
Executive Vice President &
Chief Operations Officer

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July 8, 2002



Chairman Michael K. Powell
Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Commissioners:

For several years, many large business in Mississippi have attempted to consolidate our data and voice networks into larger contracts with fewer service providers. There are many reasons for our desire, including a more efficient network management infrastructure and more attractive costs. The obstacle to consolidating long distance telecommunications lines and long distance voice services has been of a regulatory nature. This has added a cost burden to our company, not to mention frequent service failures where our customers lose the ability to communicate with the bank.

For that reason, many of BellSouth's customers apply pressure to BellSouth management to gain access to the long distance market. I recently became aware that BellSouth has now made that request of the FCC. The purpose of this letter is to offer my support for BellSouth's petition and to implore you to approve the request.

I am fully aware that the telecommunications business is complex in of itself; this complexity must surely spill over into its regulation. My understanding is that Congress passed the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which provided an environment where deregulation was possible while still maintaining numerous safeguards to ensure fair competition. To my knowledge, BellSouth has met each of those requirements as well as those mandated by Mississippi's Public Service Commission.

As companies continue to live or die by how well they can control expenses, and given the slowdown of our economy in Mississippi, we need BellSouth to provide bundled services as an option. Please provide this option to Mississippi's businesses by approving BellSouth's petition to offer long distance services.

Sincerely,

John Hairston
EVP & Chief Operations Officer

Cc: Marlene H. Dortch, FCC Secretary
Dorothy Attwood, Wireline Competition Bureau Chief
Susan Pie', Wireline Competition Bureau - Room 5C224

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